

BLACK FLAG

FOR ANARCHIST RESISTANCE

NOVEMBER '91

30p

RUSSIA, RUSSIA, ALL THEORIES FALL DOWN



What is happening in the Soviet Union? Has Communism collapsed? Is it the failure of State Communism, is it State Capitalism, a degenerate workers' state finally degenerated., the triumph of capitalism or what?

Sorry. All trash.

Famine has caused havoc in Russia as it did last century in Ireland. When the potato famine struck Ireland, this was a natural disaster but wouldn't have been a human one had it not been for the peasant tenure problem, which meant all other food was reserved for the rent and so the poor starved to death. The rich went without potatoes and were the healthier for it. Some complained their tenants were so dishonest they never notified the landlord when they died of starvation or went off to tramp the roads looking for food and so it was months before he knew he could re-let.

If lightning strikes a house, that is a natural disaster, called by lawyers an Act of God. It is not (under capitalism) an economic disaster unless you're not insured. It is if you can't afford to pay the premiums. Under most totalitarian schemes, including State Communism, it is a disaster if you don't have clout with the ruling party which can provide you with everything. The iceberg that sunk the Titanic could have hit

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Anarcho-(Showbiz)-Quiz

1. Which international film star gained fame and fortune by playing a succession of macho roles as war heroes (or sometimes Nazi villains) being physically free to do so as a legally exempted conscientious objector on pacifist grounds?
2. Was Leon Trotsky ever a film extra in New York?
3. What deposed Irish-born dictator (or national liberator, according to opinion) not only wrote and lectured incessantly on the events leading to abdication, but appeared personally in the stage version?
4. What connection is there between not paying the poll tax and watching the TV series 'Murder, She Wrote'?
5. What character from English history (important enough to have pubs named after him!) has often been shown on screen, yet Hollywood never dreamed of having him played by his direct male descendant (though a major American film star)?
6. What film star was suspected of dodgy undercover operations during the Spanish civil war and of being a U.S. Nazi agent up to (some say even after, but that's unlikely) America's entry into the world war?
7. What film star was not born in Tasmania, despite claiming to be (and how does that tell us something about Hollywood)?

WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO BLACK FLAG

At one time Black Flag had grown not only to be fortnightly but had a quarterly supplement (which was of such a high standard that we are still getting plaintive queries as to why it is not being received in remote places). It had a hall, a centre, a bookshop and mailing centre. It got press and TV attention for what it did and said, not for manufactured hype. It is still blamed by the police and press occasionally for major acts of dissent, and regarded as the sinister force behind "international terrorism", even that of movements we never supported or some we actively oppose.

We say nothing of the know-all historians who always get us wrong (Prof. Woodcock in his Penguin obituary on "Anarchism" thinks our daily "Ludd", produced for the week-long dockers' strike thirty years ago, is still being produced but a mere sheet beside his beloved paper).

Black Flag had been regularly produced for 21 years until November 1990 (No. 201). We thought it would be a matter of a few weeks or months. In the past few years we had lost four of our regular collective by emigration, two by personal economic difficulties, two by sickness, one by prison, one by death, two by getting involved on other activities. Our machinery had broken down. Though it was replaced by one survivor buying new computers on his own initiative by credit, we have not overcome the production problem. (We have though been pleased to be able to co-operate in a re-vamped Direct Action).

Still optimistic that, despite these problems, we will be able to resume regular publication soon (maybe in a different format), we have to face up to the fact as to what has happened to the pool in which we were able to swim. That is a more significant matter.

The anarchist movement has been sunk in the "anarchist" morass because the working class has been pushed out of its own movement and its ideas have been filched by middle class liberal dissent.

There now seems to be a dreary routine pattern for what once purported to be the working class movement, long since degenerated to being merely 'the Left'.

The bulk of the working class are out of it, have no sympathy with a lot of what it says - particularly the shibboleths it holds as part of a package deal. Some of the liberal and libertarian scene regard the workers as enemies half the time, unless by a happy coincidence they are making the same demands, those on the authoritarian and Marxist scene regard them as their natural followers, and wonder where they are.

The student movement of yesteryear set a standard pattern for 'Left' politics. It regarded itself as a vanguard, resurrecting the old Marxist idea of the educated class that comes in to lead the workers from outside the class, they being only 'of themselves, capable of a trade union mentality'. Whereas Marx had in mind the scholar who spent his years in the British Museum studying the way others should go, Lenin transformed the concept into the armed scholar, like the Cromwellian idea of sword in one hand

WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO BLACK FLAG ? (CONT.)

and Book in the other. This is transmuted into what are supposed to be street fighting terms are the stuff of farce.

The effect of the Anglo-American peace and commercialised music movement, confused with the anarchist morass and vice versa, has been to substitute first wishy-washy pacifism and permanent protest. Then when peaceful protest fails, the morass thinks all it has to do is to make the protests more effective with a bit of the old street fighting. No matter what it is - excessive tax, redundancies, war, invasion, cruelty to animals, let's go and have a bash at the police. Fair enough, good clean fun, reminiscent of the past and more effective than offering them flowers, but to what purpose?

Does this affect the working class in the slightest? They are in the main hostile because they resent seeing the movement they build up being taken over, its original inhabitants almost totally 'evicted,' and used for purely liberal and political purposes with which they may or may not be in sympathy. Also, it is not

exactly a secret that in a year or two the people who tag alongside every major demonstration carrying advertising slogans for Socialist Worker and the like, reducing every event to an advertising campaign, will in a few years be in journalism, advertising or even management, using their experience on the other side.

The reactionary Old Guard of the Labour Party knows full well that the only effect of its so-called left wing, and trots of various hues, will be to bar them from power because of the image they project of eccentric Tories as against ordinary ones. Their electoral prospects always depended on the working class and they have tossed it away for dubious ideology, leaving British politics, like American, as a personality game fought out in the media. Their fate does not concern us, but we have the same problem of dissociating ourselves, if for different reasons.

If we want a movement, not a morass, we have to assert our differences with these false allies, Marxist or libertarian, positively. If one seeks unity with them, one doesn't have the working class, it's as simple as that - whatever should or should

not be the case. Generations of activists have been burned out by them, they are used as a means of asserting control both by the leaders of the demonstrations and by authority itself - and still their effectiveness as opposed to industrial organisation on the one hand or guerrilla action on the other has not been assessed.

For this reason Black Flag and the anarchist movement proper has lost the pool in which it used to swim, which was working class activism. Resistance movements, where they could not be taken over, have been duplicated and imitated by Government agents of one sort or another (e.g. the original Red Army Fraction in Germany, Action Directe in France, are instances where phoney organisations have been built with the same names, the Red Brigades in Italy were taken over, the process of trying to confuse is taking place in the former Soviet countries, and most successfully it has happened in Spain where a whole organised labour movement has been copied in order to destroy it as a revolutionary force.

We do not weep that Black Flag influence is back to square one and has to rebuild again. So has the whole revolutionary anarchist movement, so is working class organisation. When the working class organisation revives, its militant sections will revive (note how "militant" has been made into a dirty word by being used by parliamentary bolsheviks). When there are working class activists there will be anarcho-sindicalist sectors, and in them we thrive. Without them we are a solitary plant growing in a paved street.

The situation can change almost overnight (as it has done in the Soviet Union). Let us be ready. Build up our nuclei now. There is nothing to hope on the parliamentary horizon, and the years of depression have gradually pushed the working class out of production where it has potential power to enforced State dependency or to servitude where it cannot control. This is what creates apathy or despair but this is what we must combat, if need be, for the time being, as lone voices in the wilderness.



RED

anything passing. It wasn't the fault of capitalism, but it was due to that system that the first-class passengers only got saved. If it had been the "Titanic Red Star" it would not have been so. It would have been the party members. Had it been the "Titanic Aryan Superman" it would have been a selection of the very rich and the top Party members.

What about Russia?

What took over after Tsarism was not Marxism, State Communism or anything else but the rule of the Communist Party top leadership which replaced the Tsar. It believed in State Communism but did not know how to carry it out. It had the relationship to State Communism that Tsarism had to Imperialism. It was a cruder, more barbaric form. In economic and social life it ran the country by diktat just as the Tsar had done. For internal security it ran by terror and secrecy, as the Tsar had done. When there was trouble it massacred. Politically, it substituted the rule of one man or woman by birthright for the Party (but this degenerated under Stalin into one man rule).

Stalinism, despite every politico myth, was not a degenerated workers' State but a regenerated Tsarist State. Its international policy followed the Tsar's but there was one important difference. The Tsar relied on the Greek Orthodox Church and on his secret police to influence and create pro-Russianism in as many countries as possible. The new Tsars relied on the Communist International and their secret police to influence and create pro-Russianism in the workers' movements everywhere.

When theology was everywhere "Queen of the Sciences" (in some universities it still is a compulsory subject for a degree) its rubbish was eagerly taken in at second-hand by



the public, re-cycled by parsons. Economics is the modern version. It is garbage disguised as science, re-cycled by politicians and journals.

challenged..

Tsarism and barbarism

Imagine someone makes you dictator of an independent Scotland (and you may, like Catherine the Great, be a German who has never been there before).. You can trust nobody to help you and must administer the whole of the Scottish economic and social life from Edinburgh down to the tiniest island. No decisions can be made without coming to you for approval. In South Ronaldsay they want a ferry boat as the old one burned down and there are no others. In Bute the factory administrator has gone to prison and the industry is at a standstill. In Sauchiehall Street in Glasgow the privies haven't been cleaned for six months for no apparent reason. In Aberdeen they're flooded with Norwegian forged ten-kroner notes. Just add to it? Could you manage?

The Russian system is not communist and never was. "State capitalism" is a political alibi. You had just to walk down a Russian street to see there were classes and you could distinguish them without speaking a word of Russian. But the economists couldn't classify them. The absence of any advertising (bar political) told you that it wasn't a capitalist country, and (unless you were a foreigner with hard currency) you were regarded almost as a criminal, certainly as a nuisance, if you wanted to buy let alone sell. The Soviet Union called itself a communist workers' state as other countries call themselves Christian, and it meant as much. What prevails in the Soviet Union is Tsarist barbarism, unchanged except for cosmetics, now being

TSARS IN THE SUNSET

hasn't solved the problem any more than they did in the 19th century (and only in the "outer Russias" can they blame it on national oppression).

What has caused the famine?

In some part there may have been a natural cause but this has been grossly accentuated by what I call (for want of a word coined by the establishment) Tsarbarism. It is highlighted by one magazine which has made a sensation by publishing economic exposures which everybody secretly knows but has been ashamed or afraid to say publicly. (Something like, in Britain and America, but not France, would be a magazine revealing even respected named political party and Church leaders, even British Royalty itself, have sexual urges and deviations, may go to houses of call or have sex outside marriage and that some who don't may masturbate).



Russia is much bigger than Scotland and "all the Russias" (in plain terms, the Russian Empire) make it vast beyond belief. And it felt impelled (under the Tsar for religious motives, under the new Tsars for political ones) to interfere all over the world. When you try to make a Norwegian Revolution to safeguard your frontier and have to consider the problems of the Outer Hebrides in relation to Oslo, a smartarse who's legged it out of the country to live in ease abroad says he's ready to take on the job any day and blames everything on you and you alone (enough to make you want to put an icepick in his head).

You are for sure a lot more intelligent than all the leaders of Russia up to Lenin, and thereafter they're deluded with a false science they're trying to put into practise and don't know why it doesn't work.

Tsardom-Barbarism (Tsarbarism?)

) got burdened with a vast bureaucracy to take down their orders but no one capable of giving them except the topmost man or woman. Bakunin was regarded as mad when he went further than the Nihilists (who said even revolution against the Tsar wouldn't alter the system given the slave mentality and they tried to reform manners instead and curb despotism by assassination). He said a revolution imbued with the Prussian ideas of Marx within the context of the slavery, obedience and repression of Russia would be an even worse system.

However both the Tsar and Stalin could deal with famine. Anyone who complained got shipped to Siberia if they were lucky, and shot if not, and people learned to die honestly and not make a fuss about it like Irish peasants. "Glasnost" - frankness - has meant they can now make a fuss about it like the Irish did, but

Take as an example the shortage of boots. Every army in the world sends boots by separate consignments - left-leg boots in one lorry and right-leg boots in the other, since they are an attractive item to steal but only a gang of one-legged men would be interested. In one town in Russia this also applied to civilian production. The factory producing right-leg boots having been closed down because the workers were required on some other project, the left-leg boots went on being produced. What could the local management do? Stop producing them and be jailed or shot for economic sabotage? They carried on for years waiting orders to stop, and when eventually orders came from the top to switch to left-leg boots. It took years to catch up and then they found the sizes didn't match.

That is a true story which sounds funny but is in fact symptomatic of

Continued over

Tsarbarism. Applied to agriculture it is even disastrous. The reason they blame communism or State communism is because the latter is in power and takes blame as it takes credit for everything. But I could match with an equally amusing story (less tragic) from my own experience at work, under capitalism.

The management sent for a team of experts to cut costs and increase efficiency. They came to the conclusion that what caused the enormous costs was the amount of overtime and decided this was a union racket. They went to every department which had inbuilt overtime and told the supervisor to cut it out unless specifically requested by the management in writing. "It means cutting two hours - at the beginning or at the end?" our supervisor asked. "At the end, of course" they said. "You start this day". They knew that the overtime could not be "justified" because they measured the amount of work done with the number of hours and acted accordingly. Curiously, nobody raised any objection. The experts thought they had us at last.

They overlooked one fact. This was a newspaper, and that night the editorial desk was clamouring for extra coverage by telephonists, copytakers and printers. "Sorry," they were told. "We'll have less than ever tonight. From 10 p.m. to 12 p.m. we'll be closed altogether". They all went mad, there were important matches to be covered, scandals, some war threat or other, the lot. Orders were no overtime unless the management specially requested, and they'd gone home for the night. Next day there were no more scientific experts

If you think this has nothing to do with Russia, it is illustrative of taking orders from the top, and what is relevant is those self-same scientific management experts offer services to the Soviet Union introducing effective management, and point out no doubt how they curbed the "Spanish practices" of Fleet Street or would have done but for the



LENIN & STALIN.
IN 1922 & 1926
RESPECTIVELY.
PICTURE TAKEN
IN 1938.

weakness of the management. Best of Russian luck.

Many Russian anarchists prefer not to talk too much of communism for the simple reason (as the Spanish proverb says) you don't talk of rope in the house of a man who's been hanged. It talks about a free market with workers co-ops

The coup

The old leaders of the Communist Party staged a coup, but why did they fail? The magic failed to work.

The first lot of squatters here took over a disused Army family block at Brighton and a young officer came, marched up and down, and pointed a threatening finger at a grotty anarcho lounging against the door smoking a reefer. "You," he said, "I'm giving you a direct order, Get these people out of here". To his surprise the magic formula, used to crush army mutinies and enforce discipline for years and taught him at Sandhurst, never worked. "Fuck off," was the bored reply.

The Communist Party leaders tried the old, well established method they had been learning in their cadre training camps for years. To their

surprise the people in the streets did not immediately dash to their homes and cower there with a packed suitcase, waiting for the knock at the door.

The parallel is not with Col. Tejero but with an earlier incident in the last days of Gen. Franco. It was like when - who was it? Glasgow Rangers fans? - went wild in the streets of Barcelona and the magic formula of bringing out the Guardia Civil never worked. They could hardly shoot down a lot of boozed Glaswegian football fans deriding their funny hats. Barcelona exploded with delight as the Guardia Civil got pelted with beer cans. That's what happened in the coup, though a few deaths did occur.

It wasn't as crazy a coup as it sounded to Newsnight viewers. The October Revolution showed you could take that mighty empire just by storming the Winter Palace, with less disturbance than that engendered by the Brixton riots. But the magic is broken.

The opportunity is there for Anarcho-Syndicalism to participate in the first Russian Revolution. There were no others.



TWENTY YEARS

AFTER

Reading the oceans of guff written by the lefties over Kuwait, it would seem the Sheikdom is a reactionary, feudal, despotic State run for the benefit of the American oil companies and a corrupt ruling class. And of course they are right. It was exactly the same twenty years ago as now.

But on Feb 17 1971 - a date we would have commemorated had the Flag been out at the time - the Sheikh lavished time, money and expense on a major banquet to host a conference of all who believed in his cause and that of the PLO. Liberals were represented by Lord Carradon and almost every Maoist and Trot group was there. IMG (with "street fighter" Tariq Ali), IS (forerunner of the SWP), the "Millitants" under their then more open trotskyist banner, along with Sinn Fein, all participated.

In the name of anti-imperialism, all received the Sheikh's hospitality and debated what to do for the cause of the Glorious Arab Islamic Revolution. One can see why the Sheikh is a bit put up about "ungrateful Palestinians" who are alleged to have supported Saddam Hussein after he mixed with that mob on their behalf. He couldn't take it out on his former honoured guests, most of whom also supported Saddam "not politically but militarily" (and insignificantly) so the dispossessed Palestinians got it in the neck on their "leaders" behalf.

What came out of the expensive shindig? We have to hazard a guess, not having been entertained by the Sheikh and his harem to dates and couscous, and the organisers were chary of publishing the minutes. But we do know that from that week on the following important events happened:

Gaddafi supplied arms to the IRA, though he has been reported



to be threatening to inform on them to the British Government in exchange for resumption of normal relations and might yet do so despite his having been snubbed.

The Maoists who penetrated and seized control of the Red Army Faction collaborated with Arab Nationalists, and became the target for Mossad (Israeli intelligence). As a result the original RAF was destroyed by the German political police.

Huge sums of money came from or through Gaddafi to Fascist groups (anti-Jewish) and Trotskyist groups (newspeak anti-imperialists and anti-racialists), on the basis that they opposed Israel. (Mossad had already penetrated most Trotskyist groups in the Arab world as part of their main strategy) The daily trot paper switched to supporting the Great Arab Revolution under the Ayatollah Khomeini, equating this with the socialist revolution. Most trot groups followed suit (except for the few pro-Israel ones).

The anti-Ba'ath parties, as well as all the groupings opposing the Ayatollah, found themselves the target of attack everywhere even in the West. The WRP trotskyists photographed Iranian student demonstrations against the Ayatollah in Britain.

Sinn Fein publicly identified themselves as in solidarity with Saddam Hussein as a fellow-anti-imperialist

(though being careful not to upset the Great Satan of American imperialism, a more important source of funding than either Allah or Mary).

The Palestinians continued to be held out for twenty years more (correctly) as victims of Israeli aggression but no more was done for them in the next twenty than in the previous twenty. Most Arab States kept them in refugee camps, except Kuwait which needed workers but treated them as transitory and has now turned on them for the actions of leaders (whom they have not chosen) in supporting Saddam Hussein's invasion.

Many urban guerrilla factions in Europe if not Maoist, were taken over by them directly afterwards, or simultaneously, by Arab-paid units, and were all penetrated by the police.

As a farcical conclusion, Arab money was lavished on the National Front and the British National Party, Anti-Semitic feeling engendered by them actually helped Zionist propaganda and the main result of Arab-subsidised racism was to make the lives of Muslim immigrants, especially those of Arab origin, that much harder.

Oil profits, the Israeli State, Palestinian dispossession, Arab feudalism, all continue much as before and social liberation is as far off as ever.

OBITUARY

Sadly since we last appeared we have lost one of last survivors of the active resistance to the former Spanish monarchy, as well as of the industrial resistance to the Republic and civil war fighter. Almost a legendary figure to the fighters against Franco and possibly the most-known person in the international anarchist movement. Emilienne Morin (Mimi to friends) died at the age of 90. She was active in the French, Spanish and international movements to her death though better known to the outside world as the companion of Buenaventura Durruti. Born in Angers (France), she and Buenaventura lived together first in Brussels, then all over Europe. She was administrative secretary of the Durruti column in action during the civil war after his death in 1936. After Franco won she returned to France, where their daughter Colette survives her.

STAY AT HOME ARMY

those who watched Newsnight on April 5th 91 (BBC-2 TV) learned at long last of Gladio, one of several 'stay at home armies' set up by the British and American governments after WWII ostensibly to be a partisan group in case of a Russian invasion, privately to fight 'communism' at home and in practice to advance fascism and suppress the working class wherever militant. The Italian setup proved more corrupt than the others and was used for any amount of financial wheeler-dealing involving links with the Papacy, freemasonry and the Mafia. A scoop? Not exactly. You may have read it in Black Flag years ago, and if you didn't, it (and more) is contained in the book 'Steffano della Chiaie' published by

Cienfuegos\Refract ten years ago (still available, if not a best seller. Who said our irregularity meant our news coverage would be out of date by the time it appeared?) As a result of the Gladio operation, the Italian anarchist movement was particularly harassed (this didn't come out in the TV programme which only dealt with its effect on the 'left'). The railwayman Pinelli (secretary of the Black Cross) was killed by the police, Valpreda spent years in jail trying to establish his innocence, hundreds have been arrested and detained, dozens of Anarchists are still in jail - all because of the climate created by Intelligence agents acting as fascist gangs in horror actions to blame the 'left' (only too glad to pass on the blame to anarchists).

Answers to quiz

1. James Mason.
2. Though Trotsky's admirers always hotly denied it, many people thought so for years and one clip shows a custard pie about to be thrown in his face. Biographer Isaac Deutscher claims it was an actor with a physical resemblance who after the revolution played Trotsky himself. (But it's a nice thought about the custard pie).
3. Lola Montez (born Eliza Gilbert) toured Europe as a 'Spanish dancer' and became dictator of Bavaria via the only way then open to women, the King's bedroom, but was a strong and enlightened ruler according to the standards of 1840s liberals, opposing the aims of Imperial Austrian clericalism. Later she toured in 'Lola Montez in Bavaria'.
4. The grandfather of film actress, now TV star Angela Lansbury ('Jessica'), was Socialist George Lansbury who went to prison in the 20s with fellow Bow councillors rather than administer poor law cuts (equivalent in its effects on the poor to the poll tax). Catch that happening now!
5. Imagine Oliver Hardy playing Admiral Hardy (with Stan Laurel as Nelson?)
6. Errol Flynn.
7. Merle Oberon claimed she was born in Tasmania - Flynn was - because it would in the 30s have been fatal to her career to have admitted that she was of mixed race. She was also, according to her husband's nephew, wanted by the police in her native Bombay.

News of the Anarchist Black Cross

The International Conference of the Anarchist Black Cross took place in Athens early in October of this year. Details next issue.

We are not carrying news of political prisoners and prison struggles as our information is not up to date, and we welcome updated reports from ABC groups. These should in any case be available after the Greek conference.

Future of Black Flag

Whether we come out regularly again depends on the response to this. We have a mass of letters asking about us (and hope we've answered them, satisfactorily). A couple of pounds donation from each reader would balance the horrific debts incurred to the printers by our last two issues. (Anyone who sent in subs during the gap and has despaired of ever getting the paper should write for a refund though we still intend to carry on).

There is a new publication out "KSL" the bulletin of the Kate Sharpley Library. c/o BM HURRICANE